

Economic and Social Affairs

Economic and Development Issues Development Bodies and Programs

Commission on Science and Technology for Development

(CSTD) is a Commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established in 1992. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), based in Geneva, serves as secretariat for CSTD through its Division of Investment, Technology, and Enterprise Development (DITE). The CSTD has 43 member states, elected for four-year terms using a method of staggered rotation within each regional group. The composition is: Africa, 11; Asia, 8; Latin American and Caribbean, 8; Eastern Europe, 5; and Western Europe and Other States, 10. The CSTD meets twice annually.

The CSTD's mandate is to provide ECOSOC and the General Assembly (UNGA) with advice and guidelines on relevant science and technology (S&T) issues through analysis, reporting, and policy recommendations. The CSTD is a multilateral forum for examining, understanding, and advancing science and technology questions and policies and their implications for development. In 2006 ECOSOC gave the CSTD an additional mandate to review and assess the progress made in implementing the agreed actions of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). This entails collating UN and partner-body responses on WSIS action items and compiling a yearly status report with recommendations.

The CSTD chooses two biennial themes, one focused on information and communication technologies and the other on traditional science and technology issues. The themes for 2008-2009 are: development-oriented policies for inclusive information society, including policies relating to access, infrastructure, and an enabling environment; and science, technology, and engineering for innovation and capacity-building in education and research. The 11th Session in Geneva in May 2008 produced a resolution detailing progress on WSIS implementation and featured discussion on the themes that should lead to more substantive discussion and a more formal science-focused outcome in 2009.

Membership in the CSTD positions the United States to engage proactively on issues important to developing countries and to help guide and contribute to the assessment of WSIS implementation. It also offers the opportunity to promote and empower S&T for development through information and communications technologies; highlight U.S. scientific and technological contributions and best practices; encourage science-based decision-making on critical development topics; and promote U.S. expertise and efforts in offering guidance and S&T-based capacity-building for development.

Commission on Sustainable Development

In December 1992 the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) as a functional commission to follow up implementation of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Rio Earth Summit. Based at UN Headquarters in New York, the CSD is composed of 53 UN members elected to three-year terms. During its first decade, the CSD met formally four weeks annually to consider specific sustainable development issues and promote implementation of internationally agreed-on development goals. At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa, governments called for specific reforms of the CSD, including limiting negotiations in CSD sessions to every two years, limiting the number of themes addressed at each session, and having the CSD serve as a focal point for discussing partnerships that promote sustainable development, including sharing lessons learned, progress made, and best practices.

The United States has been a member of the CSD since its inception. Following the WSSD the United States actively advanced ideas for how the CSD could implement reforms to serve as a stronger catalyst for action. At the CSD's 2003 session, the United States worked closely with other CSD members to develop a multi-year program of work to address a series of "thematic clusters" and cross-cutting issues in two-year "implementation cycles." The first cycle (2003-2005) focused on water, sanitation, and human settlement issues. While the second cycle (2005-2007) focused on energy-related issues. The 2008-2009 cycle addresses agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, and Africa. The 2010-2011 cycle will discuss transport, chemicals, waste management, mining, and sustainable consumption and production. Each two-year cycle includes a non-negotiating "review year" to assess the state of implementation and to provide a venue to focus on sustainable development partnerships and capacity-building activities. The second half of each cycle is a "policy year" to discuss policy options and possible actions to address the constraints and obstacles in the process of implementation identified during the review year.

The United States lowered its level of representation at the CSD review session in May 2008 to display disappointment with Zimbabwe's chairmanship of a meeting focused on agriculture, but maintained robust engagement through a strong delegation comprising technical experts from eight federal agencies. The United States contributed formal interventions throughout the meeting that highlighted its partnerships, and submitted a national report containing information on U.S. domestic and international land-use and agricultural programs. The United States sponsored over a dozen learning centers, side events, and partnership fair events, and co-hosted a weekend showcase with the local non-governmental organization community.

Regional Economic Commissions

There are five regional economic commissions that report to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The United States is a member of three: the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The regional commissions are funded out of the regular UN budget, of which the United States pays 22 percent, as well as through voluntary contributions. They are charged with “raising the level of economic activity” within their respective regions and “maintaining and strengthening economic relations,” both among themselves and with other countries of the world. U.S. participation in regional commissions advances and safeguards U.S. foreign policy and commercial interests in these regions.

The ECE, headquartered in Geneva, was established in 1947 to encourage economic cooperation within Europe and between Europe and other countries with close trade and business ties. ECE membership consists of 56 countries, including those of Western Europe, as well as the United States, Canada, Israel, Turkey, and the Central Asian states and those of the Caucasus region of the former Soviet Union. In December 2008 the Secretary-General appointed Jan Kubis (Slovakia) as the ECE Executive Secretary.

The ECE is traditionally a “standards-setting” and coordination body in many technical fields, such as e-commerce, energy, the environment, vehicle construction, road safety, timber and agricultural produce, border crossing, and statistical collection. Many ECE standards are adopted around the world. U.S. Government agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Forest Service, and the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, and Transportation regularly participate in working groups and chair committees. The U.S. Chief Statistician is a vice-chair of the Conference of European Statisticians, which coordinates statistical methodology across the region and serves as a forum for international harmonization in statistics.

Since 2005 many member states, including the United States, have been urging the ECE to devote more time to capacity-building, particularly in countries in transition in Central Asia and the Caucasus, by offering workshops on standards and related issues. The ECE created a new Team of Specialists on Public-Private Partnerships in 2007, co-chaired by an American and including three U.S. private sector participants. In 2008 the ECE approved a new Working Group on Aging, and agreed on reforms to improve the process for the Environment for Europe ministerial meetings. At the 62nd Plenary in 2007, the ECE decided to hold biennial meetings with the next plenary scheduled for March 2009.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was established in 1948. The 33 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are member states, together with several North American, Asian, and European nations that have historical, economic, and cultural ties with the region, for a total of 44 member states. The United States is a full member

with voting privileges. ECLAC also has eight Associate Members, including the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. ECLAC is headquartered in Santiago, Chile, with two subregional offices for Mexico and for the Caribbean (Trinidad and Tobago). It also has offices in Bogota, Brasilia, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Washington. In July 2008 the Secretary-General appointed Alicia Bárcena of Mexico to be the Executive Secretary of ECLAC.

ECLAC's mission is to improve cooperation among member states and international entities to advance economic and social development in the region. Although it previously advocated closed markets and state-run economies, ECLAC has come to recognize some of the benefits of trade liberalization and privatization. It has also made a name for itself by providing excellent technical assistance in data collection for census purposes. Many Caribbean and Latin American countries use ECLAC's resources and expertise for demographic and other data collection at the country level.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has 62 members and associate members. Headquartered in Bangkok, ESCAP provides technical support to member governments on a wide array of socio-economic development issues, such as macroeconomic policy, poverty reduction, and inclusive development; trade and investment; transport; environment and development; information, communication and space technology and disaster risk reduction; social development; and statistics. Its five regional institutions also provide technical expertise on a range of issues. In late 2008 the General Assembly approved the establishment of three new ESCAP subregional offices to serve East and Northeast Asia, North and Central Asia, and South and Southwest Asia in addition to an already existing subregional office serving the Pacific. Noeleen Heyzer of Singapore has been the Executive Secretary General of ESCAP since August 2007. Ms. Heyzer is the first woman to head the organization.

UN Children's Fund

The General Assembly created the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 1946 to meet the emergency needs of children after World War II. UNICEF broadened its efforts to help children by providing both humanitarian assistance and long-term development aid targeted at children and families. UNICEF has 139 offices and a presence in more than 150 countries, as some offices cover more than one country. Its programs address children's health, sanitation, nutrition, basic education, and protection needs, wherever possible through low-cost interventions at the family and community levels. UNICEF's total 2008 expenditures were \$3.098 billion, an 11-percent increase over 2007.

Expenditures on program assistance increased by \$291 million to \$2.808 billion. Combined expenditures on program support (\$167 million), management and administration (\$74 million), including centrally-shared security costs (\$10 million), amounted to \$251 million, an increase of only one percent. In 2008 total income to UNICEF increased by 13 percent, from

\$3.013 billion in 2007 to \$3.39 billion in 2008 and exceeded the financial plan for 2008 by \$299 million.

UNICEF achieves encouraging results in most of its major areas of work: child health (polio eradication, HIV/AIDS), child education, and child protection (trafficking in children, child abuse). UNICEF's well-known name and positive public image have enabled it consistently to draw substantial funding from the private sector (roughly 26 percent of total revenues). As a respected authority on children and their well-being, UNICEF typically works through broad partnerships with developing country governments, bilateral donors, and non-governmental organizations. UNICEF programs target vulnerable and marginalized children and their families and are intended to improve the capacity of national governments to respond to their needs. The United States has worked to ensure that UNICEF maintains strong operational capabilities. A significant proportion of UNICEF's work is also tied to advocacy, capacity-building, piloting and disseminating best practices, and doing research on problems affecting children.

The United States has been a member of UNICEF's Executive Board, now comprised of 36 member states each serving three-year terms, since its inception. In 2006 the United States began another term running until 2009. Former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman has served as UNICEF's Executive Director since 2005.

In 2008 UNICEF increased its high-impact health and nutrition interventions. UNICEF has capabilities to provide rapid and cost-effective delivery of medicines and materials in support of national and international efforts. The Measles Initiative, a partnership among UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Red Cross, helped to achieve a reduction of 74 percent in global measles deaths between 2000 and 2007.

Child survival remains the top U.S. policy priority for UNICEF. UNICEF is a key U.S. partner worldwide on many issues, including polio eradication; child protection; providing safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene; and combating diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS. The United States also engaged with UNICEF in 2008 as a partner in improving UN management practices through the UN Transparency and Accountability Initiative. UNICEF implemented a number of management reforms aimed at improving its organizational transparency and accountability, such as developing a results-based budget for the 2008-2009 biennium. A new organizational accountability framework policy is scheduled to be adopted by the UNICEF Executive Board in June 2009.

The United States continued to encourage UNICEF to play a leadership role in efforts to harmonize and simplify UN development activities, particularly at the national level. In dealing with joint programming between UNICEF and other UN agencies, UNICEF's collaboration was based on evidence of efficiency gains in programming, took account of the need to maintain distinct lines of financial accountability to donors, and recognized the separate identities and roles of UN agencies.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee established a “cluster-led” approach to improve the UN response to humanitarian disasters. UNICEF was responsible for the water and sanitation, nutrition and feeding, and protection sectors. UNICEF was also an active participant in the UN Consolidated Appeal Process, a mechanism through which humanitarian organizations planned, implemented, and monitored their activities as well as appealed for donor support of humanitarian assistance programs. UNICEF also strengthened its emergency response capacity. The United States supported UNICEF’s role in emergencies and its work in Iraq and Afghanistan.

UN Conference on Trade and Development

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), a permanent forum for discussions on development-related trade and investment issues and funded through regular UN assessments, functions through a variety of intergovernmental groups. These are its governing body, the Trade and Development Board; two commissions (on trade and investment); and a quadrennial ministerial conference. In addition, UNCTAD hosts numerous expert meetings annually on issues related to trade and development. Based in Geneva, UNCTAD has 192 member states. Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi (Thailand) became the UNCTAD Secretary-General on September 1, 2005.

In April 2008 UNCTAD held its quadrennial conference in Accra, Ghana. The theme of the week-long meeting, “Addressing the opportunities and challenges of globalization for development,” had four sub-themes: sustainable economic development and poverty reduction; trade; investment; and reforms to strengthen UNCTAD. These themes provided the structure for negotiation of a new four-year work program for UNCTAD and a framework for discussion of policy options in each of these areas. The United States sent an interagency delegation (including the Departments of State and Commerce, the office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and the U.S. Agency for International Development) to Accra and played a leadership role in forging consensus around the new work plan set out in the UNCTAD XII outcome document. In the weeks and months following the conference, U.S. representatives in Geneva worked with UNCTAD staff and other member-state representatives to establish a detailed plan of work to implement the direction provided by the conference in Accra. UNCTAD also continued to implement several reforms throughout the year to increase further budget transparency and accountability. It made positive research contributions to promote trade, investment, and development through its World Investment Report and country-specific Investment Policy Reviews.

The United States has been an active participant in UNCTAD since its founding in 1964. U.S. engagement is based on a conviction that free trade is a vital avenue for development, and it results in strong encouragement for UNCTAD’s work on trade and investment facilitation. As of end 2008, the United States was the third-largest voluntary funder of UNCTAD’s technical assistance programs, with major contributions to UNCTAD’s Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) software program. Over the past 25

years, countries that have adopted the ASYCUDA customs program have consistently and dramatically reduced corruption and increased government revenues from customs administration. The United States also supported UNCTAD's work in investment policy reviews and the development of databases that enable countries to find markets for their products and to search investment agreements and tariff data. In addition, UNCTAD managed a successful program to build debt-management capacity in member states, recognizing the importance of debt financing as one of a diversified set of sources of development financing.

Throughout 2008 UNCTAD's Deputy Secretary-General position remained vacant. Traditionally regarded as the senior "donor country" post in the organization, the United States and several European countries proposed well-qualified candidates for the position. The head of UNCTAD's Trade and Investment Division acted as temporary deputy to the organization.

UN Development Program

The UN Development Program (UNDP) is the leading development agency of the United Nations. It is headquartered in New York, with field offices in over 130 developing countries and regions. The United States is a member of the 36 member-state UNDP Executive Board that governs the organization.

The United States has been a top contributor to UNDP in recent years, providing nearly \$100 million in 2008 to the organization's "core budget," un-earmarked funding that supports administrative and general programming costs. UNDP's programs mainly focus on poverty reduction, democratic governance, environment, and crisis prevention and recovery. These areas broadly mirror U.S. foreign policy interests.

An important U.S. objective for UNDP in recent years has been to promote and maintain stability and economic growth in the 50 least-developed countries (most of which are in Africa), where UNDP spends over 60 percent of the program funds from its core budget.

In 2008 the United States continued to work with UNDP management and Executive Board members to improve the focus of the organization's programs and to channel greater resources to assisting African countries in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to sustain progress. Working with UNDP management, the United States established an assessment system to monitor and measure the effectiveness of UNDP's least-developed country programs that promote good governance and private-sector development and the agency's contributions to overall stability and economic growth.

Throughout the year the United States also continued working within the UNDP Board and with management to make UNDP a more effective organization by improving its transparency and accountability practices.

As a result of these efforts, the organization adopted an "accountability framework" in September to codify and strengthen internal oversight systems, including the establishment of an ethics office, a financial

disclosure policy, a whistle-blower protection policy, and a policy to disclose internal audits to board members. UNDP management also began posting on country office websites information related to UNDP's country programs, such as project descriptions, project budgets and results, and procurement data.

UN Human Settlements Program

The General Assembly (UNGA) created the UN Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT) in 2001 by converting the UN Center on Human Settlements into a full UN program under the direction of the General Assembly. UN-HABITAT's mandate is to support the development of sustainable human settlements, with special concern for uncontrolled urbanization and access to basic services such as water and sanitation. It is also the UN focal point for efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of significantly improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

After cutting off voluntary contributions to the UN Center on Human Settlements, the United States resumed funding following the complete restructuring of the organization by new management and conversion to UN program status. In 2008 the United States increased its contribution to UN-HABITAT's core programs and operations budget to \$1 million. The United States also engaged UN-HABITAT to execute an urban youth project in Afghanistan.

UN-HABITAT is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, and is led by Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka (Tanzania), whose tenure began in September 2000 as Director of the then-Center on Human Settlements. UNGA elected Mrs. Tibaijuka to a second four-year term as Executive Director in 2006. UN-HABITAT's activities are guided by a Governing Council comprising 58 member states that meets every two years in odd numbered years (the next meeting will be in 2009). Member states are elected to the Governing Council through established regional-group representation for four-year terms. The United States was re-elected in 2006 for another term by the Western Europe and Other Group (WEOG), which holds seven seats on the Governing Council. The Governing Council approves UN-HABITAT's budget and guides its policies and strategies.

UN-HABITAT sponsors the World Urban Forum (WUF) in the years between Governing Councils as a means to strengthen the international partnerships, both public and private, needed to address the challenges of rapid urbanization in developing countries. WUF IV took place in Nanjing, China November 3-6, 2008, and attracted participants from 155 countries and over 20,000 visitors to the many exhibits set up to showcase the theme of the four-day conference, "Harmonious Urbanization," which addressed the interwoven environmental, economic, and socio-cultural elements of sustainable urbanization. The U.S. Government Delegation included officials from the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

In 2008 the United States promoted UN-HABITAT's role as a catalyst to advance work on human settlements, primarily through normative and capacity-building work, including conducting research, disseminating best practices, creating training materials, collecting data and monitoring key indicators, and providing guidance to policy makers on housing and urban issues. UN-HABITAT produced a series of regional reports and a flagship report on the State of the World's Cities, all recognized by technical experts for their contribution to urban policy.

UN-HABITAT supplemented these efforts by implementing community-level projects to address specific urban problems, with an emphasis on pilots and demonstrations. Its technical arm worked with local authorities and national governments to develop and decentralize services. These operational activities included a Slum Upgrading Facility and a new Experimental Reimbursable Seeding Operation (ERSO), both meant to strengthen national human settlement programs by providing seed capital and other credit enhancements, as well as technical assistance to mobilize domestic resources for housing and urban infrastructure services. The 2007 Governing Council approved creation of the four-year ERSO, and during 2008 UN-HABITAT developed operations manuals and established an international steering committee.

During 2008 UN-HABITAT began implementing its newly developed Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP) for 2008-2013, designed to focus its strategies and improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The MTSIP established a Results-Based Management matrix to guide its programming and institutional development, including important internal and UN-wide reforms. Under the MTSIP UN-HABITAT began establishing clearly defined indicators, targets, and priorities for its work in the six focus areas established in the MTSIP, which encompass its normative and advocacy role, substantive areas of focus (urban planning and governance, pro-poor land and housing, environmentally sound urban infrastructure and services, and human settlement financing systems), and internal management excellence.

In 2008 UN-HABITAT made important strides in elevating the visibility of shelter and urban issues within the UN community and fostered cooperative programming through such activities as the development of the UN-HABITAT-UNEP Partnership Framework 2008-2013. UN-HABITAT also worked to build new partnerships with the private sector in an effort to tap the technical expertise and experience of private enterprises to address urban development issues, such as urban infrastructure finance and construction techniques. UN-HABITAT began to explore its role in addressing climate change, recognizing that cities are a key front in the battle both to prevent and to adapt to climate change.

Environment

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was created in 1988 as a joint effort of the World Meteorological Organization and the UN Environment Program. The IPCC conducts periodic assessments of studies on the science of climate change, its potential impacts, and ways countries adapt and seek to mitigate climate change. In 2007 the IPCC issued its Fourth Assessment Report involving contributions from several hundred experts; in 2008 it completed a special technical paper on Water and Climate Change. The IPCC will begin to develop its Fifth Assessment Report in 2009.

UN Convention to Combat Desertification

The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) arose out of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and entered into force in December 1996. With 193 parties this convention is designed to combat desertification and to mitigate the effects of drought on arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid lands, particularly in Africa, through effective action at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements. The UNCCD is unique because it addresses the problem of desertification through a bottom-up approach, by empowering local people to take the lead in identifying innovative approaches to sustainable agricultural development. The convention aims to achieve these goals by changing priorities of existing aid resources to make them more effective in addressing desertification issues. In particular, the UNCCD is intended to address the fundamental causes of famine and food insecurity by stimulating more effective partnerships among governments, local communities, non-governmental organizations, and aid donors and by encouraging the dissemination of information derived from new technologies.

The United States has been a party to the UNCCD since 1996 and actively engages in its activities. In the recent past the United States served for two years as chair for one of the subsidiary bodies of the convention, the Committee on Review of Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). In 2008 the United States served as the Japan/United States/Canada/Australia/New Zealand (JUSCANZ) group representative on the Convention's governing bureau. The United States actively participated in all eight meetings of the Conference of the Parties and played a prominent role in the other subsidiary body, the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). Continued U.S. participation in and support for the UNCCD helps to advance U.S. strategies on sustainable land management issues and sustainable agriculture practices for arid, dry, and sub-humid lands. In particular, interventions by the United States were critical for the convention's movement into an effective new implementation phase. In the 10-Year Strategic Plan approved during the Eighth Meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP 8) in Madrid, Spain, in September 2007, parties stressed the need to move the Convention to a results-

based management approach. To implement the Strategic Plan, the Secretariat is currently preparing a multi-year strategic work plan, under the guidance of the governing bureau, on which the United States has a seat, and a biennial work program and budget. In 2008 parties met to review these work plans and moved forward on the development of indicators to measure successful implementation of the Convention and the 10-Year Strategic Plan. The United States engaged in both the CST and CRIC meetings, which provided opportunities to emphasize effective implementation of a results-based management approach as outlined by the Strategic Plan and to review thoroughly its implementation among the parties.

UN Environment Program

The UN Environment Program (UNEP), founded in 1972, is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, and has six regional offices (Europe, Africa, North America, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and West Asia). Its Governing Council consists of 58 member states, including the United States, elected by the UN General Assembly for four-year terms. UNEP's Executive Director (ED) Achim Steiner was elected in June 2006 by the General Assembly after being nominated by the UN Secretary-General. Mr. Steiner quickly undertook program-wide reform and reorganization within UNEP, including drafting a results-oriented Medium-Term Strategy to focus UNEP's work and transform it into a more effective and accountable organization. UNEP is continuing with its transition to results-based management with active U.S. support. The 10th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) in Monaco in February 2008 adopted several decisions, including endorsement of the Medium-Term Strategy and its thematic priorities as a basis for the 2010-2011 Program of Work and Budget, scheduled for adoption at the February 2009 Governing Council in Nairobi.

UNEP sets the environmental agenda within the UN system, addressing environmental problems that transcend borders and potentially affect the health and prosperity of U.S. citizens. Active involvement in UNEP helps the United States promote sustainable development and protect the environment by combating global environmental degradation. Involvement in UNEP also promotes the interests of U.S. industries that are directly affected by evolving international environmental standards, particularly in the area of chemicals management. UNEP's six cross-cutting areas of environmental focus are: climate change, resource efficiency, harmful substances, environmental governance, disasters and conflicts, and ecosystem management.

The United States strongly supports work done in many of UNEP's programs, such as early warning, monitoring, and assessment of environmental threats; the regional seas program; capacity-building for domestic environmental governance in developing countries; and the global program of action to combat land-based sources of marine pollution. The United States has been the main supporter of the UNEP Mercury Program, which helps

countries reduce mercury contamination. This program will continue as UNEP serves as the venue to launch an International Negotiating Committee to achieve a legally-binding international agreement on mercury. Through UNEP the United States provides support for a variety of important multilateral environmental agreements that UNEP is contracted to administer. UNEP also makes an important contribution to regional stability through work in areas affected by conflict, and the United States greatly values UNEP's work to publicize emerging environmental trends. In 2007 UNEP published its fourth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-4) report, a multi-stakeholder, peer-reviewed global assessment of the state of the world's environment and priorities for action.

The United States was instrumental in the negotiations culminating in the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building in 2005 and is working with UNEP and its members to incorporate capacity-building within the regular programs of UNEP. As a part of this effort to focus UNEP's programs on implementation, the United States has encouraged UNEP to strengthen its linkages with scientific institutions and is assisting developing nations to improve their ability to monitor and assess environmental change and implement multilateral environmental agreements. As prescribed by Paragraph 169 of the World Summit Outcome Document of September 2005, the United Nations in 2006 initiated a two-track review to improve coordination and efficiency of its environmental activities. This process is ongoing and has thus far resulted in discussions within the General Assembly and UNEP on "International Environmental Governance," as well as a UN report. Because international environmental governance refers to the entirety of international organizations and agreements that govern environmental concerns, any decisions on this issue could affect UNEP and its programs of work, as well as U.S. environmental and economic interests. U.S. participation will be vital as the international community moves forward with this important debate within UNEP.

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) entered into force in March 1994. The ultimate objective of the UNFCCC is to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system. The United States ratified the UNFCCC in 1992; through 2008, 191 countries have ratified the convention. The Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC entered into force in February 2005. This protocol requires developed nations to reduce their collective greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 5.2 percent below 1990 levels during the period 2008–2012. The United States is not a party to the Kyoto Protocol.

During the 13th Conference of the Parties (COP 13) in December 2007 in Bali, Indonesia, parties adopted the "Bali Roadmap," launching negotiations for a post-2012 climate framework to be completed at COP 15 in Copenhagen, Denmark, by 2009. The United States was actively involved in

2008 in efforts to secure agreement before the Copenhagen meeting on an outcome that will mark a decisive step toward reducing global emission trajectories to levels needed to stabilize atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations.

Population

Commission on Population and Development

The UN Commission on Population and Development (CPD) advises the UN Economic and Social Council on population changes, including migration, and its effects on economic and social conditions. It is also charged by the General Assembly to monitor, review, and assess implementation of the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994.

The CPD held its 41st Session April 7-11, 2008, in New York on the theme of “World population monitoring, focusing on population distribution, urbanization, internal migration, and development.” The Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development delivered a statement commenting on U.S. national experience in managing urbanization issues, focusing on government-private sector partnerships. The United States joined consensus on the resolution adopted at the session on the theme of the commission’s meeting. The U.S. Delegation delivered an explanation of position on references in the resolution to reproductive health and the ICPD. The Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Sha Zukang, addressed the commission, noting the need for additional research on the impact of over half the world’s population now living in cities. UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director Thorya Obaid stressed that urbanization can play a very positive role in social and economic development if countries plan ahead and respond with appropriate policies and programs to address future urban growth.

UN Population Fund

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) provides funding for population and reproductive health care programs in over 140 countries. UNFPA supports maternal, child, and reproductive health care and family planning programs worldwide. UNFPA also works on issues of gender empowerment, child marriage, and violence against women. UNFPA provides assistance in the framework of 3-to-5-year country plans developed jointly with recipient countries and approved by the Executive Board.

The United States is a member of UNFPA’s Executive Board and participates actively in the decision-making process to safeguard U.S. interests. In 2008 the United States did not provide funds to UNFPA on the basis of a determination under the Kemp-Kasten Amendment.

The United States worked closely with UNFPA management in 2008 to improve the organization’s transparency and accountability to ensure the effective use of resources and monitoring of programs, as part of a U.S.

initiative — the UN Transparency and Accountability Initiative (UNTAI) — to strengthen governance and oversight throughout the UN system.

The UN Secretary-General appointed Thoraya Ahmed Obaid (Saudi Arabia) to be the Executive Director of UNFPA in 2001. In 2008 the Secretary-General extended her tenure for another term, which will end in December 2010.

Social Issues

Commission for Social Development

The Commission for Social Development (CSocD), a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), consists of 46 member states. It meets annually in New York and held its 46th session February 6-15 and 22, 2008. CSocD is the UN body charged with follow-up and implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Platform of Action adopted at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development.

ECOSOC decided in Resolution 2005/11 that beginning with the 2007 session, CSocD would be organized as a series of two-year, action-oriented implementation cycles. The sessions would include a policy segment and the Commission would continue to review programs of action pertaining to social groups. The theme for the 2007-2008 review was “Promoting Full Employment and Decent Work for All.”

At its 2008 session, CSocD adopted resolutions on: “Social Dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development,” “Promoting Full Employment and Decent Work for All,” “Future Organization and Methods of Work,” “Further Promotion of Equalization of Opportunities by, for, and with Persons with Disabilities and Protection of Their Human Rights,” and “Mainstreaming Disability in the Development Agenda.” Concerning the Commission’s future organization and methods of work, CSocD recommended to ECOSOC that social integration be the priority theme for the 2009-2010 review and policy cycle.

There were also panel discussions on promoting full employment and decent work for all, review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, and mainstreaming disability in the development agenda, as well as a briefing on intensifying efforts to eliminate violence against women in the context of full employment and decent work.

The U.S. statement emphasized the role of government in creating and maintaining a climate conducive to economic growth and job creation; respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, including freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, and eliminating forced and child labor and discrimination; and U.S. programs to help workers update their skills and access job training and education.

Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and UN Office on Drugs and Crime

The UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (Crime Commission) is the principal UN policy-making body on criminal justice issues. The 40-member Commission convenes annually at the UN office in Vienna. Many decisions from these annual sessions are forwarded to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for endorsement. The United States is an active member of the Crime Commission and is substantially engaged both in plenary discussions and in resolution negotiations.

The 17th session of the Crime Commission convened April 14-18. Through its national statements, the United States succeeded in raising awareness of U.S. efforts to combat violence against women, as well as trafficking in forest products. At the session a side event sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice showcased a new virtual training tool titled "Sexual Assault: Forensic and Clinical Management," and the United States played a leading role in negotiating a decision calling for an expert group meeting to update the UN "Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice." The United States played a leading role in negotiating a resolution titled "Efforts in the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons." The Commission adopted seven resolutions and one decision.

The 4th UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) Conference of the Parties (COP) was held in October in Vienna. The United States has used the UNTOC as a basis for mutual legal assistance and extradition in at least 15 cases around the world and played an active role in the UNTOC COP, serving as president of the Bureau (comprised of the president, the vice-presidents and the rapporteur) during the 2008 session. The United States used the presidency to guide discussions and to promote practical consultations on implementation of the Convention and its protocols to combat trafficking in persons, migrant smuggling, and illicit trafficking in firearms with U.S. experts serving on panels related to all three issues, as well as one panel on the protection of victims and witnesses. The United States also sponsored two side events on firearms and on fraudulent documents and interagency fusion centers. These events were well attended and resulted in a number of countries looking to the United States for additional information and expertise on these issues. The COP adopted a total of eight decisions – twice as many as had been approved during the preceding COP in 2006.

Commission on Narcotic Drugs

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), both based in Vienna, support U.S. drug control objectives. UN drug control conventions (the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, as amended by the 1972 Protocol; the 1971 Convention on

Psychotropic Substances; and the 1988 UN Convention against the Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances) provide the framework for international drug control. This framework includes prohibiting the cultivation of opium, coca and marijuana; targeting drug traffickers and their proceeds; promoting national campaigns on drug abuse prevention and treatment; and regulating precursor chemicals used in the production of many illicit drugs.

The 53-member UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), of which the United States has been a member since 1946, is the central policy-making body within the UN system for dealing with drug-related matters. The CND held its 51st session in Vienna March 10-14. The United States sponsored two resolutions that received wide support from other member states and effectively promoted U.S. policies. One resolution endorsed the concept of early screening and brief intervention in health-care settings as an effective mechanism to curb substance abuse. The second resolution emphasized the importance of addressing cannabis use, particularly among youth, given the correlation between cannabis use and mental health problems. The United States participated actively in the CND thematic debate on the review of progress achieved since the 1998 UN General Assembly Special Session on drugs (UNGASS) and took a leading role in negotiating a resolution providing for the preparations of the “year of reflection” in advance of the UNGASS high-level segment to be held at the 52nd CND (2009). Throughout 2008 the United States actively participated in the technical working groups that this resolution established, as well as subsequent negotiating sessions for the political declaration and action plan. In these meetings the United States helped to craft the “vision” for the next decade of international drug control supply/demand reduction and related issues.

U.S. financial support to UNODC increased in 2008 and had significant impact on the operations and expansion of UN counternarcotics programs and policy. The United States provided more than \$26 million in voluntary contributions to support a wide variety of UNODC activities. UNODC used funds provided by the United States to enhance global programs to control the flow of precursor chemicals, combat money laundering and terrorist financing, provide legal advice on treaty implementation of the UN drug conventions, prevent drug abuse and HIV/AIDS, and augment an international network of treatment and rehabilitation centers.

The United States continued its funding support for the work of the International Narcotics Control Board to advance implementation of a 2006 U.S.-sponsored resolution that sought to prevent the diversion of precursor chemicals to the illicit market. U.S. funds also supported numerous regional projects, including border control in Central Asia and drug control capacity-building in East Africa. U.S. funding also aided country-specific programs including providing for eradication verification and monitoring illicit crop activities in Afghanistan; providing for alternative development in Laos; supporting anti-trafficking efforts of law enforcement officials in Vietnam;

and implementing one program to monitor illicit crops and another to strengthen capacity to identify, seize, and recover illicit assets in Peru.

International Narcotics Control Board

The 13-member International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) is an independent, quasi-judicial control body with a mandate to promote governments' compliance with the provisions of international drug control treaties and to assist governments in this effort. Board members serve in their personal, not national, capacity. American citizen Melvyn Levitsky is currently on the Board. The Board meets three times annually to monitor implementation of drug control treaties and the international movement of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. The INCB presented its annual report to the CND in March 2008. The 2007 report included a discussion of the principle of proportionality and drug-related offenses. The Board further highlighted the dangers of rogue Internet pharmacies and counterfeit drugs, and recommended that UNODC consider new programs of work to deal with these issues. The report also took extensive note of Africa's growing role as a major cocaine and heroin artery to Europe and one of the main regions used for diversion of precursor chemicals used to manufacture illicit drugs.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Negotiations on the draft UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, or Disabilities Convention) began in 2003. Early in the negotiations, the U.S. Delegation stated that given the complexity of regulations and enforcement mechanisms needed to ensure equal opportunity for persons with disabilities, it would be more productive for nations to strengthen their domestic legal frameworks related to non-discrimination and equality rather than to negotiate a new UN convention. Ralph Boyd, then Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, stated that the United States did not intend to become a party to the treaty.

At the same time, the United States clarified that it would join constructively in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Disabilities, which negotiated the language of the treaty. During the early stages of deliberations, the U.S. Delegation was present but only gave technical assistance. As talks progressed, the U.S. Delegation was instructed to negotiate actively on an increasing number of subjects in the draft convention.

The draft convention's optional protocol allowed individuals and groups to present complaints against states parties to the CRPD Committee, which could then review the complaints and issue recommendations to the concerned state.

The concluding five weeks of negotiations took place January-February and August 2006. In August member states reached consensus on moving the text forward to the fall 2006 UN General Assembly (UNGA). At UNGA member states adopted the Convention by consensus. The Convention

received its 20th ratification on April 3, 2008, triggering its entry into force (with its Optional Protocol) on May 3, 2008.

As of the end of 2008, the United States had not signed or ratified the Convention, nor conducted a review to determine whether the United States could implement the Convention under existing law, whether new laws might be required, or what reservations, understandings, and declarations might be necessary to narrow or clarify the scope of U.S. treaty obligations under the Convention to support possible U.S. ratification.

Human Rights

Commission on the Status of Women

The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established in 1946 as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It seeks to improve political participation, economic opportunity, social development, health, and education for women. Following the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing Women's Conference) the UN General Assembly mandated that the CSW follow up the conference by reviewing regularly the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action and by mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities. The United States regards the CSW favorably, is active in the commission's work, and has successfully used annual CSW meetings to highlight U.S. government activities to improve conditions for women throughout the world. These include U.S.-introduced resolutions, U.S.-sponsored panel discussions, and other types of side events.

The CSW's 2008 session was held in New York February 25-March 7. The U.S. Delegation was led by Ambassador Patricia Brister. Member states adopted resolutions by consensus on: "Ending Female Genital Mutilation;" "Women, the Girl Child, and HIV/AIDS;" "Release of Women and Children Taken Hostage, Including Those Subsequently Imprisoned, in Armed Conflicts;" and "Strengthening of the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women."

The United States called for a vote on and voted against a resolution adopted on the "Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian Women." Each year the United States has opposed this unbalanced and one-sided resolution that criticizes Israel while failing to note that Palestinians and Arab states also have responsibilities in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The resolution addresses a number of issues, including territory and refugees, which must be resolved by negotiations between the parties.

Member states adopted by consensus agreed conclusions on "Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women," which was the main theme of the 2008 session. The United States joined consensus with an explanation of position that addressed references to "reaffirming" the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Public diplomacy was an important part of U.S. involvement in the CSW. The United States held panel discussions on “Child Marriage: Promising Approaches for Prevention” and “U.S. Family Justice Centers: An International Model for Coordinated Community Support to Combat Domestic Violence.” The centers are an initiative connected with the U.S. Violence Against Women Act (1994) and its reauthorizations, and they offer coordinated community assistance to domestic violence victims.

The United States pays 22 percent of CSW’s total costs. Conference services constitute a large portion.

Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO Committee), part of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), is the UN body that reviews requests by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for consultative status in ECOSOC. This status allows NGOs to attend, and at times speak, in meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies. Committee members are elected on the basis of equitable geographic distribution. The member states of the committee for 2008 were Angola, Burundi, China, Colombia, Cuba, Dominica, Egypt, Guinea, India, Israel, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Sudan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The NGO Committee monitors NGO activities to ensure that they comply with the provisions of ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, which outlines the rights and obligations of NGOs with consultative status. The NGO Committee’s decisions are considered recommendations, usually in the form of a draft decision calling for action by ECOSOC, which makes the final decision regarding an NGO’s status.

Because the NGO Committee is a highly politicized technical committee, the NGOS that are most frequently scrutinized and attacked are Israeli NGOs and those working on issues involving human rights, the rule of law, democracy, and the gay and lesbian community. U.S. presence and participation on the committee helps these NGOs obtain and maintain ECOSOC accreditation. The U.S. Delegation also exercises crucial oversight of the administration of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ NGO Section.

Controversial cases considered during 2008 included applications from the Democracy Coalition Project (action deferred), the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (granted consultative status), the Human Rights Foundation (denied consultative status), and the Hudson Institute (granted consultative status).

Holocaust Remembrance

The UN General Assembly (UNGA) observed the third International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust on January 28. The observance focused on the need to ensure the protection of human rights for all, and coincided with the 60th anniversary year of the adoption of

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The daughter of the late U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos delivered the keynote address on her father's behalf; she spoke on "Civic Responsibility and the Preservation of Democratic Values." The United Nations' first permanent Holocaust exhibit was unveiled January 30. It presented a timeline of that tragedy in the context of World War II and the United Nations' founding. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum provided educational materials, in both Spanish and English, to several UN information centers and organized training seminars to help information center staff provide information to local citizens and governments on the Holocaust and to improve worldwide video conferences on the dangers of hatred and intolerance. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said:

The International Day in memory of the victims of the Holocaust is thus a day on which we must reassert our commitment to human rights. We must also go beyond remembrance and make sure that new generations know this history. We must apply the lessons of the Holocaust to today's world. And we must do our utmost so that all peoples must enjoy the protections and rights for which the United Nations stands.

The International Day of Commemoration was established by a consensus vote of the General Assembly in November 2005. Israel introduced the resolution and 104 member states co-sponsored. The resolution followed the successful December 2004 request of the United States, the European Union, Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, and Russia to convene a special session of the General Assembly in January 2005 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps.

U.S. public delegate Cheryl Halpern, in UNGA on November 3, 2008, affirmed joint U.S. and UN efforts to continue remembrance of this horrific event. In a pointed reference to Iranian Holocaust denial, Halpern repeated the U.S. position that "To deny the holocaust is tantamount to approving the extermination of the Jewish people in particular, and to the approval of genocide in general," and called such a stance "unacceptable and unconscionable." This reflected the 2008 Global Anti-Semitism Report issued by the Office of the Special Envoy for Anti-Semitism, which identified denial of the Holocaust as a form of anti-Semitism.

Halpern highlighted the excellent work done to implement the full range of activities called for by Resolution 60/7. She commended the UN outreach program for its seminars, roundtables, online educational materials, films, and music concerts to counter the spread of bigotry, and affirmed the U.S. role as a "committed participant" in those efforts.

UN Human Rights Council

The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) held three regular sessions (March 3-28, June 2-18, and September 8-26) in 2008. In addition the HRC held three special sessions: January 23-24 (Israel/Palestine conflict); May 22 (world food crisis); and November 28 (situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). It also met informally throughout the year. The United States was active early in the year, but following a Cabinet-

level decision in June to disengage, the United States did not participate in the HRC except on a limited basis and only on issues pertaining to vital U.S. interests.

As in 2007 the HRC's performance in 2008 was disappointing. The Council continued its unbalanced treatment of Israel by issuing numerous resolutions condemning Israel and conducting a special session focusing solely on Israeli actions. While the HRC renewed mandates on Burma, North Korea, and Sudan, it took no action on Iran, Cuba, or Zimbabwe despite indications of serious and persistent human rights violations in those countries.

The anticipated Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process began in 2008 with the HRC reviewing the human rights records of 48 countries over the course of three sessions spread throughout the year. Each country's review lasted three hours, with time for questions and recommendations from members and state observers. Notably, the HRC president ensured that the review of Israel remained civil and constructive despite previous concerns that it would deteriorate. The UPR process was embraced by countries with moderate records on human rights, but was not given as much weight by others with more troubling human rights records, such as Sri Lanka. Some countries with poor human rights situations used their participation in the UPR to evidence "cooperation" with the international community on human rights issues while ignoring many of the constructive recommendations offered by Council members and state observers. The United States produced questions and recommendations for a number of countries under review, and U.S. observers monitored UPR proceedings; due to the non-engagement policy decided upon in June, however, the United States did not participate actively in the December UPR session.

The U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Geneva participated actively in institution-building negotiations and worked very closely with members of the Western European and Others Group (WEOG), among others, to develop joint positions on key issues, including freedom of expression, defamation of religion, and country-specific situations and special rapporteur mandates. The United States co-sponsored resolutions on Somalia, genocide, torture, good governance and human rights, North Korea, Burma, and human rights and counterterrorism. In addition the United States delivered strong statements on country-specific human rights situations, including those in Sudan, North Korea, and Burma, as well as defending the mandates of special rapporteurs for human rights defenders and freedom of expression.

The recurring "Defamation of Religion" resolution is one of the most problematic and the United States strongly advocates against it every year. The Council adopted it again in 2008 by a plurality vote. The resolution focuses on combating defamation of religions (analogous to calls for prohibiting incitement to hatred), but it has been used by some UN member states to justify restrictions on freedom of religion and expression. A Canadian resolution on freedom of expression was amended from the floor by Cuba and Egypt to include in the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression a focus on the "abuse" of freedom of expression (i.e.,

defaming religion, particularly Islam) that changed the intent of the resolution and forced Canada, Mexico, Brazil, India, the United States, and the European Union to withdraw co-sponsorship. Unfortunately the resolution passed despite this opposition.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

The High Commissioner for Human Rights is the principal UN official responsible for advancing human rights, and reports directly to the Secretary-General. Under the High Commissioner's leadership, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) works to ensure the practical implementation of human rights obligations and carries out tasks requested by UN human rights bodies. The United States, through its missions to the United Nations in Geneva and New York, has worked with the High Commissioner to build a strong cooperative relationship.

The OHCHR has gradually expanded its presence in the field and continued to do so in 2008. Throughout the year the OHCHR maintained eight regional and 11 country offices. While its country office in Uganda closed, the High Commissioner reached an agreement with Morocco to establish a regional office for North Africa. In addition two regional offices were established in Central Asia (Bishkek) and West Africa (Dakar) and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Government of Qatar for a human rights training and documentation center for Southwest Asia and the Arab region. The OHCHR also supported the human rights components of UN peacekeeping operations worldwide and deployed human rights officers to support UN country teams in countries including Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Nicaragua, Niger, Papua New Guinea, and Serbia. The work of the OHCHR in 2008 included provision of technical assistance and advisory services activities, such as monitoring human rights situations, assisting human rights capacity-building of governments in host countries, building networks with local and regional civil society groups, and promoting ratification and implementation of key human rights treaties.

In addition to carrying out its operational work in the field, the OHCHR provides staff for the secretariat of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), the human rights treaty implementation bodies, the advisory committee, and UN human rights special procedures, including special rapporteurs and independent experts. It does not control and does not have great influence over either the HRC or the special procedures. Navanetham Pillay, a South African national, was appointed as the High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2008.

UN Democracy Caucus

The UN Democracy Caucus (UNDC) is a network of democratic nations through which the United States can advance the work of the United Nations in areas such as human rights, democracy, women's rights, and economic development. The United States believes that democratic nations must work more closely together to help the United Nations live up to its

founding principles. The Democracy Caucus is comprised of the 126 countries that are part of the Community of Democracies (CD), whose members meet the criteria set out during the Community of Democracies Seoul Ministerial in 2002. The Democracy Caucus is not intended to supplant long-standing regional or other groupings, but rather to provide an added mechanism that like-minded democratic nations can use to cooperate on resolutions and other initiatives to promote democratic practices and principles. The United States participates in the Community's 17-member Convening Group, which is based in New York and which provides leadership for the caucus.

The Chair of the Community of Democracies serves as the de facto Chair of the Democracy Caucus. Portugal is the caucus chair for 2008-2009 and will host the 2009 Community of Democracies Ministerial. Portugal took the initiative to develop a draft Democracy Caucus action plan, but has not yet followed up with a program of work that includes an agreed set of initiatives and resolutions, including leading the caucus in proposing an Education for Democracy resolution in the Third Committee.

Poland became host to the newly-established Permanent Secretariat of the Community of Democracies, which was approved in the Bamako Consensus final document in November 2007. Poland provided \$350,000 to equip the Secretariat with office space and support staff; the United States also provided \$73,000 in seed money for the Secretariat in September 2008. Now the Permanent Secretariat needs to begin focusing on its core missions of supporting the CD Chair, coordinating information, and helping the CD Working Groups to be effective.

The U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York consulted closely with key CD members, including India and Portugal, to identify concrete steps to further the Caucus' work. In 2008 a series of discussions explored initiatives the Caucus might usefully pursue. The United States continued to seek ways for the UNDC to be productive in the UN General Assembly.

UN Democracy Fund

The UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF), created as a Trust Fund by the UN Secretary-General in 2005, had a very successful fourth year as the preeminent UN body supporting democracy-promotion efforts by civil society groups. In May the Fund's Advisory Board approved its second set of grants, totaling approximately \$25 million. The 86 projects approved focused on civic education, voter registration, access to information, and democratic dialogue. For the next round of funding, UNDEF received a record 2,143 applications, an increase of 14 percent over the previous round. Proposals came from organizations in 138 countries, with the vast majority submitted by local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Africa and Asia. Equally important, by the end of 2008 countries as diverse as Chile, Peru, Georgia, Germany, India, Slovenia, Qatar, Romania and Australia had pledged or contributed over \$90 million to support UNDEF initiatives.

Also in 2008 UNDEF chose Michael Doyle, a prominent professor at Columbia University, as Chairman of the Advisory Board; the United States strongly supported his appointment. Doyle is a former UN Assistant Secretary-General and was a Special Adviser to former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Doyle had also been a vice president and senior fellow of the International Peace Institute. Since his selection and the appointment of Roland Rich as UNDEF Executive Head in 2007, the Fund has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting civil society efforts directly through soliciting and funding grant proposals from NGOs worldwide. With its emphasis on strengthening the foundations of democracy at the grass-roots level, UNDEF has empowered organizations in every region of the world to promote democracy and to reinforce governing institutions.

UN General Assembly Third Committee

With active lobbying and global demarches by the United States and its allies in 2008 two procedural no-action motions with respect to country-specific resolutions were defeated and three significant country-specific resolutions focusing attention on the human rights situations in Iran, North Korea, and Burma were adopted by the UN General Assembly's (UNGA) Third Committee. These successes were tempered by the adoption of resolutions on Defamation of Religions and Mercenaries, both of which the United States opposed.

The United States achieved important successes with the passage of resolutions on the human rights situations in Iran, North Korea, and Burma. The Iran resolution passed the Third Committee by a vote of 70(US)-51-60. Importantly, more countries abstained than in 2007 and the Third Committee defeated a no-action motion by 10 votes compared to only a one-vote margin last year; several positive changes were from the Africa and Latin America groups, though Serbia and Iraq voted with Iran for the first time. Similarly, the Third Committee passed the resolution on Burma by 89(US)-29-63 after handily defeating a no-action motion. The resolution on the human rights situation in North Korea passed by 95(US)-24-62.

Several key resolutions passed by consensus, including those on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism, and Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In addition the Third Committee adopted consensus resolutions opposing Violence against Women and Trafficking in Women and Girls, as well as another resolution (sponsored by Belarus) concerning Trafficking in Persons. A number of resolutions dealing with crime and drugs also received approval by consensus, including: a resolution establishing an African Institute on Crime and Drugs; one on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice; and another on International Drug Control.

A resolution on mercenaries passed over U.S. opposition by a count of 122-51(US)-5. As in previous years the Third Committee passed a resolution on Palestinian Self-determination by 175-5(US)-5. A Russian-sponsored resolution on racism passed with the United States being the only

opponent (because, among other reasons, of freedom-of-speech concerns), although many states abstained 122-1(US)-54. Also despite the opposition of the United States a resolution on implementation and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Program of Action passed by a margin of 130-11(US)-35 and a resolution on Defamation of Religions passed 85-50(US)-42. Resolutions on the right to development, the right to food, and the rights of the child all passed with the United States opposing alone in each case. A resolution on extrajudicial executions passed with a U.S. abstention [121-0-57(US)]. However, the United States opposed and the Third Committee rejected two amendments to this resolution sponsored by the Organization of the Islamic Conference involving sexual orientation and foreign occupation. A resolution calling for the implementation of the World Action Plan for the Disabled passed by a unanimous vote – [176(US)-0-0].

Humanitarian Affairs

Disaster and Humanitarian Relief Activities

In 2008 the United States and the United Nations cooperated extensively on disaster response and humanitarian relief activities. The United States provided leadership as a member of UN agency governing bodies and support groups, including the Donor Support Group (ODSG) for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The United States also continued to be active in initiatives to reform the UN humanitarian system, including through its participation in the Advisory Group of the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), in providing funding and guidance to the UN cluster initiative (an economic development concept intended to stimulate urban and regional economic growth), and in strengthening the Humanitarian Coordinator system.

As Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, John Holmes (United Kingdom) continued his strong support for the humanitarian reform process. OCHA built upon its 2007 internal restructuring (“realignment”) by consolidating in New York the country-desk structure of the Coordination and Response Division (CRD), originally split between New York and Geneva. With this consolidation the CRD assumed full responsibility for coordinating OCHA’s field and regional offices, as well as for managing the response both to natural disasters and complex emergencies.

In 2008 the United States continued to provide substantial support to UN humanitarian operations worldwide in response to natural disasters, as well as to ongoing relief efforts in areas of protracted crisis such as the West Bank, Gaza strip, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Somalia, and Chad.

An estimated 200 million people were directly affected in 2008 by earthquakes, floods, storms, landslides, and other destructive events. At least

236,000 people lost their lives, and damages exceeded \$180 billion. OCHA responded to 55 such emergencies.

A significant portion of U.S. assistance was channeled through UN operational agencies like the World Food Program (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS). In fiscal year 2008, the United States contributed approximately \$1.8 billion to WFP for food commodities and humanitarian air operations and more than \$129 million to UNICEF programs, with an emphasis on immunization, girls' education, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, and emergency relief. The United States also gave more than \$507 million to UNHCR, making it the organization's largest single donor. Overall the United States is the world's largest food aid donor, providing half of all food aid internationally and 40 percent of total resources contributed to the WFP.

In November 2008 Margareta Wahlström was appointed to the newly created position of Assistant Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

The United States actively engaged the United Nations and its member states on humanitarian- and disaster-related resolutions in the UN General Assembly and its Economic and Social Council. The United States also supported resolutions on strengthening UN coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance, improving the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and the protection of UN personnel, and several country-specific resolutions pertaining to humanitarian situations.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Since its inauguration in 1951, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), based in Geneva, has led and coordinated international efforts to protect and provide durable solutions for the world's refugees. It also plays a key role in providing for refugees' basic needs, such as food, shelter, health care, and education. UNHCR has over 6,600 staff operating in 110 countries. Antonio Guterres (Portugal) has served as High Commissioner since June 15, 2005. In 2008 issues that High Commissioner Guterres focused on included managing large refugee repatriation efforts, including to Afghanistan, Southern Sudan, and Burundi; UNHCR structural and management reform (field and headquarters); UN reform, including where UNHCR agreed to take the lead for protection, camp coordination and camp management, and emergency shelter for internally displaced persons (IDPs); and strengthening partnerships with international and non-governmental organizations. The United States continued to support these priorities, at the same time stressing to UNHCR that it should not over-extend itself and should continue to prioritize its mandate for refugee protection.

In 2008 the global refugee population protected and/or assisted by UNHCR totaled some 10.5 million (the number does not include more than 4.6 million Palestinian refugees under the mandate of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East). UNHCR provides humanitarian assistance as either the lead agency or a partner for IDPs, estimated to number 14.4 million in 2008, up almost one million from 2007. The number of stateless persons increased to 6.6 million in 2008 – though there have been breakthroughs in Nepal and Bangladesh. The change in numbers of IDPs and stateless persons led to an increase in the overall population of persons of concern to UNHCR from 31.7 million to 34.4 million.

Approximately one-third of refugees are from UNHCR's Asia Pacific region, which includes Afghanistan. Iraq (which is in the Middle East and North Africa region) and Afghanistan together account for nearly half of all refugees under UNHCR's responsibility worldwide, with more than 2.8 million Afghan and 1.9 million Iraqi refugees. An estimated 600,000 refugees were repatriated voluntarily in 2008. Despite significant return and reintegration challenges, more than 280,000 refugees returned to Afghanistan in 2008. There was also significant voluntary repatriation of refugees to southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Angola, Rwanda, and Burundi; major repatriation operations in Liberia were completed. Pakistan continued to be the asylum country with the largest number of refugees (1.8 million), with Syria second (1.1 million).

Resettlement traditionally is a solution for a small percentage of all refugees: from 1998-2008, 807,000 refugees were resettled to a third country, less than one percent of all refugees. In 2008 the number of those resettled with UNHCR assistance was 88,800 worldwide; most were from Burma, Burundi, Bhutan, Somalia, Iraq, and the DRC. The United States resettles more refugees than the other 25 resettlement countries combined. Other major resettlement destinations include Canada, Australia, and Sweden. The United States admitted 60,192 refugees in fiscal year (FY) 2008. Most, but not all, were through UNHCR referrals.

The UNHCR Executive Committee (EXCOM), which is responsible for approving UNHCR's budget and advising UNHCR on issues of concern, is comprised of 78 member states, including the United States. In October 2008 the 59th Session of EXCOM met to discuss protection programs and policy, management and oversight, finance, and human resources. High Commissioner Guterres noted the increasing number of conflicts around the world was causing an increasing number of forced displacements. Widening problems of population growth, urbanization, and competition for scarce resources also placed increasing pressure on UNHCR's capacity and budget.

To enhance transparency and elicit greater contributions, UNHCR restructured its budget from an annual to biannual basis with four core components: refugee assistance, statelessness, return and reintegration assistance, and IDPs. The refugee and stateless budgets will be program budgets, while the IDP and reintegration budgets will be project-based. While

the United States approved the budget redesign, it expressed concern that the project approach taken in the IDP and reintegration budgets could lead to greater earmarking, reduced flexibility, and impaired efforts in burden-sharing. The proposed redesigned budget structure was adopted at the 2008 EXCOM meeting. UNHCR also introduced a Revised Framework for Resource Allocation and Management designed to improve needs/priorities-based resource allocation, management, and accountability.

In FY 2008 the United States contributed over \$507 million to UNHCR to help refugees, IDPs, stateless people and other populations of concern. In addition, U.S. funding supported UNHCR's ongoing reform process aimed at improving its capacity to address new and ongoing crises. Of the total U.S. contribution, over \$234 million went toward the annual budget. In addition, the United States contributed over \$251 million toward UNHCR's supplementary budgets both for refugees and IDPs in countries such as the DRC, Sudan (including Darfur), Western Sahara, Ethiopia, Kenya, Burundi, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Yemen, Mauritania, Iraq, Colombia, Georgia, and Sri Lanka. The remaining \$22 million in funding supported additional key activities that the United States asked UNHCR to undertake, including: resettlement and referral activities; strengthening UNHCR's protection capacity; supporting secondary education for Bhutanese refugees; developing refugee law courses; addressing gender-based violence in the Americas; supporting capacity-building of the Best Interest Determination Guidelines on Unaccompanied and Separated Children; expanding HIV/AIDS programs; and supporting American Junior Professional Officers with UNHCR. Overall, donor contributions met 92 percent of UNHCR's 2008 budget of \$1.174 billion, with \$33.9 million coming from the UN general budget.

Domestic and overseas personnel of the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) worked in concert with UNHCR field and headquarters staff to ensure UNHCR's effective and comprehensive execution of its mandate. In addition to addressing budget issues during the 2008 EXCOM meeting, the U.S. Delegation worked to advance a number of other interests. These included strengthening efforts by the international community to address protection and the pursuit of durable solutions for refugees; maximizing UNHCR's operational performance and accountability; increasing coordination and strengthening partnerships among UNHCR, its donors, refugee-hosting countries, and UNHCR's implementing and operational partners; and improving emergency preparedness and response capacity. The United States also focused on refugee and humanitarian worker security issues, the protection of refugee women and children, improving UNHCR's approach to durable solutions, management reform, camp management, and clarifying UNHCR's role with IDPs.

In addition to the annual EXCOM meeting, UNHCR holds three Standing Committee meetings each year. At all meetings and in bilateral negotiations with relevant governments, the United States reiterated the need for greater information-sharing and transparency in areas of human resources, management, and operations. The United States stressed the need to support

the High Commissioner's management reforms and called for increased donor support for the work of UNHCR.

Since 2001 the relationship between State/PRM and UNHCR has been governed by a Framework for Cooperation which sets forth priorities and shared goals. In 2008 framework priorities included strengthening performance indicators under the Results-Based Management framework as well as decentralization and regionalization reforms intended to support operations and beneficiaries in the field and to bring decision-making and support as close as possible to delivery points. The United States also sought to ensure that regionalization and decentralization incorporate appropriate budgetary authority and clear lines of accountability. Other framework priorities relate to staffing policies such as gender balance, workforce strengthening, and improving the representation of Americans in UNHCR's workforce.

To ensure accountability and effectiveness in the field, State/PRM provides annual monitoring and evaluation (M&E) training covering international organizations and NGOs both for incoming officers in Washington and for refugee coordinators posted overseas. PRM also provides expanded M&E sessions for Washington staff to enhance and strengthen M&E concepts throughout the year. In addition, U.S. refugee coordinators are requested to participate in and report on UNHCR's Country Operations Plans (COPs) for the coming year. UNHCR's COP process provides an ideal opportunity for the U.S. Government to gain valuable insight into UNHCR's planning process as well as the overall direction of its programs. It also provides an opportunity to influence policy and resource decisions in the field and to monitor and evaluate UNHCR's progress toward its goals and objectives, as well as those agreed to in the PRM-UNHCR Framework for Cooperation.

UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Since 1950 the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has provided education, health, and social services to Palestinian refugees and their descendants who reside in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. In 2008 these refugees numbered over 4.6 million. UNRWA, led by Commissioner-General Karen Abu Zayd (United States), had a split headquarters between Gaza and Jordan and maintained five field offices located in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. It had a staff of more than 29,000, most of whom were Palestinian refugees.

UNRWA dedicated approximately 52 percent of its regular budget to education in 2008, including teachers' salaries and educational materials. UNRWA allocated 19 percent of its 2008 regular budget to health services and another 10 percent to relief and social services to support the most vulnerable refugees. In addition to its regular budget the UNRWA had emergency appeals for activities in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as Lebanon.

In 2008 the United States continued to fund UNRWA's program of Operation Support Officers (OSLO) through its contribution to UNRWA's Emergency Appeal for the West Bank and Gaza. These international staffers work to ensure the neutrality and independence of UNRWA operations by monitoring UNRWA's facilities and operations systematically so that the facilities are not used for political purposes or militant activity.

Also in 2008 UNRWA enhanced electronic-learning opportunities in its highly regarded U.S.-funded human rights and tolerance education program, including the creation of a human rights website, development of multimedia workstations focusing on human rights, and production of interactive compact discs containing human rights material. In 2008 all of UNRWA's 689 schools, 10 vocational training centers, and three educational sciences faculties participated in the tolerance-education, conflict-resolution, and democracy-training programs.

UNRWA's Emergency Appeal for Gaza/West Bank totaled \$237.7 million in 2008 to respond to emergency needs for food, temporary employment, and relief. Through the Emergency Appeal UNRWA provided food assistance to 169,000 refugee families in the West Bank and Gaza (approximately 835,000 individuals) and created almost six million workdays for 90,000 unemployed refugees. In late December 2008 UNRWA served as the lead international organization responding to the increased humanitarian needs in Gaza resulting from the Israeli military's Operation Cast Lead, which started on December 27.

In 2008 UNRWA's three-year Organizational Development Plan (OTP) continued to implement reforms in service delivery and program management, including strategic planning, resource management, and accountability. A specific achievement of the OTP is UNRWA's ongoing development of a medium-term strategy for 2010-2015, which focuses on needs-based planning and taking into account the differing circumstances of the reform areas while strategically prioritizing UNRWA policy and programming in the face of chronic funding shortfalls.

The UN Board of Auditors (BOA), Board of Examiners, and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) scrutinize UNRWA's operations and fiscal practices to ensure accountability. In 2008 the BOA released its audit of UNRWA for the biennium ending December 31, 2007. The results showed UNRWA to be fully in line with other UN agencies in implementing BOA recommendations. In 2008 UNRWA also enhanced accountability through strengthening of its capabilities – in monitoring and evaluation, oversight, investigation, and reporting – as part of the OTP process.

In fiscal year 2008 the United States contributed \$184.7 million of UNRWA's total general and emergency needs of approximately \$935.5 million. This contribution included \$99.9 million to UNRWA's general fund to provide health care, education, and relief and social services to Palestinian refugees. It also included \$57 million for food, short-term employment, and emergency health needs in response to UNRWA's emergency appeal for the West Bank and Gaza. The United States also contributed \$27.8 million to

support reconstruction of the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in Northern Lebanon following its destruction due to fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the terrorist group Fatah al-Islam, as well as emergency assistance to more than 27,000 Palestinian refugees displaced by the fighting.

UN Role in Food Security

In response to the social and economic impact of the sharp rise in food prices worldwide in 2008, which constituted a food security crisis in some developing countries, the Secretary-General established a UN High-Level Task Force (HLTF) on food security. The HLTF produced a Comprehensive Framework for Action that was intended to serve as a blueprint for coordinating the response of UN agencies and the international financial institutions (IFIs). The task force is made up of heads of the UN agencies and IFIs, not UN member states. The United States is not a member of the task force but maintains an informal relationship with it. The following reports on the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Food Program describe the activities of those organizations in response to the food security crisis in 2008.

The United States also participated actively in the “UN High-Level Conference on Global Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy,” held in Rome June 3-5, and attended by 43 heads of state or government. The Conference was held by the United Nations in response to the crisis caused by rapidly increasing food prices. It resulted in a final declaration that called on affected countries, donors, and international organizations to meet urgent humanitarian needs, support expanded food production, continue efforts toward trade liberalization, and promote investments in science and technology to ensure food security in the long term. The declaration recognized challenges and opportunities of biofuels by calling for the exchange of information on biofuels technologies and for an international dialogue on biofuels in the context of food security and sustainable development. The declaration also made references to the need for improved technologies for agriculture (biotechnology) — an important issue for the United States.

World Food Program

The World Food Program (WFP), led by American former U.S. Undersecretary of State Josette Sheeran, is the front-line UN agency in the fight against global hunger. In 2008 WFP delivered food to about 100 million beneficiaries, of whom more than half were children, in 77 countries. WFP is also the lead UN logistics agency on which the international humanitarian community relies to conduct relief operations in hostile and hard-to-reach environments.

WFP’s governing body is the Executive Board with 36 members, including the United States. Overall, the United States is the world’s largest food-aid donor, providing half of all food aid internationally and more than \$2 billion to the WFP in calendar year 2008 (a record \$1.8 billion in fiscal year

2008). The United States provides on average slightly more than 40 percent of total resources contributed to the WFP.

WFP responded to the food security crisis in 2008 by increasing its 2008-2009 program of work to \$10.9 billion – an 87-percent increase since October 2007 – to meet new needs as well as expanded requirements in existing programs. This includes a budget of \$5.2 billion for calendar year 2009. WFP received more than \$5 billion in confirmed contributions in calendar year 2008.

WFP's Strategic Plan for 2008-2011 contained the following five strategic priorities: to save lives and protect livelihoods in emergencies; to prevent acute hunger and invest in disaster preparedness; to restore and rebuild lives after emergencies; to reduce chronic hunger and undernutrition; and to strengthen the capacity of countries to reduce hunger.

WFP is an important partner in achieving U.S. humanitarian and development goals. The bulk of U.S. assistance in 2008 – over \$1.8 billion from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the State Department – went to emergency and protracted relief and recovery food and logistics operations in priority countries. These included Afghanistan, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya. In fiscal year 2008 USAID contributed approximately \$24 million of the President's Response Framework to the Global Food Price Crisis to WFP for local and regional procurement of food aid in Ethiopia and Somalia. The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration provided approximately \$32.8 million to WFP in 2008 for short-term assistance to refugees, mainly to bridge gaps in the aid pipeline.

In 2008 WFP had school feeding operations in 70 countries and provided school meals and/or take-home rations to 20.5 million children. Working with national governments, local authorities, and other aid groups, WFP uses food to attract children to school in areas where enrollment ratios are lowest and where feeding schoolchildren will have the greatest impact. Since 2001 the United States has been the largest single donor to WFP school-feeding activities. U.S. contributions to WFP global school feeding programs come from the McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program, administered by the Department of Agriculture. This program provides for donations of U.S. agricultural products, as well as financial and technical assistance, to feed school children and maternal- and child-nutrition projects in low-income, food-deficit countries that are committed to universal education. In 2008 WFP was the implementing partner for McGovern-Dole school-feeding programs in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Laos, Malawi, Pakistan, and Rwanda. USDA provided some \$54.6 million in McGovern-Dole support to WFP in fiscal year 2008. USDA also provided \$13 million in support to WFP relief and recovery operations in East Timor and Tajikistan using Title I funding through the Food for Progress program.

WFP operates exclusively from voluntary contributions of commodities and cash donated by governments and other donors. WFP's

overhead is one of the lowest among aid agencies (7 percent), which means that 93 cents of every dollar goes to feed the hungry. In 2008 WFP had 10,200 employees (down from 10,587 in 2006) and had approximately \$3.72 billion in direct expenditures.